



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

JUNE 2017 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 6

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Sunshine Week or just more drizzle?



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

It appears that we "woke" too late. Power is now largely concentrated in the hands of those who eschew the involvement of the public and have little to check their lust for power.

South Dakota voters went through the very expensive and stressful process of gathering signatures for an anti-corruption ballot initiative that passed in November. The South Dakota legislature, unwilling to have their actions subject to public scrutiny, declared a State of Emergency giving them the power to overturn the ballot initiative.

We in Michigan are familiar with

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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such maneuvers. When it became apparent that the campaign to raise the minimum wage would result in a ballot initiative to let the voters decide in 2014, the legislature circumvented it by passing their own measure. They raised the minimum wage just enough to invalidate the ballot initiative and added an irrelevant appropriation measure to it so it could not be overturned by a future ballot initiative.

Michigan ranks 50th among the states in transparency according to the Center for Public Integrity, and rather than reforms, the legislature has acted only to further obfuscate its machinations. Republican State Senator Arlan Meekhof went so far as to say that Michigan citizens should keep their noses out of the legislature's business.

Nevertheless, every Sunshine Week since 2012, a group of Michigan legislators start spring by introducing a package of bills to increase transparency. Yet each year, the State Senate refuses to take up the measures. (Founded in 2005, Sunshine Week is a national

initiative intended to raise public awareness about the importance of government transparency.) Meanwhile, the legislature doubled the amounts individuals can donate to their campaigns and stripped the public of the right to use the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for legislative documents. They claim this was done to protect correspondence from constituents. The transparency measure introduced this March explicitly provides for the redaction of identifying information in constituent correspondence. It was unanimously passed in the House. One can only hope that Republican state senators, who firmly control Michigan's Senate, will get a clear message from their constituents that they, too, should pass these measures.

It was revealed in January that \$100,000 of the Michigan House Republican Campaign Committee funds were unaccounted for, with no one knowing how they might have been used to influence the outcome of last November's election.

One is left to wonder if campaign contributions influenced the House to:

- pass an anti-picketing law that increases penalties for picketing and allows companies to file complaints about pickets without having to show any actual business harm; or
- repeal a law that requires employers to include information about an ongoing strike when they advertise to hire employees who will replace employees who are on strike.

If we want things to start to change, we must demand that Senator Meekhof, currently the Majority Leader, allow a hearing on Senate Bill 246, the Legislative Open Records Act (LORA). Concerned citizens can call Meekhof's office directly at (517) 373-6920 and also ask their state senator to tell Meekhof that they would like to see the bill move forward. To find your state senator's name and contact information, go to www.senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html.

Poverty: a pre-existing condition under AHCA

by Malinda Holmes
EMU Contributor

Previously pulled from voting in late March because of a lack of support, the revised American Health Care Act (AHCA) passed in the House of Representatives by four votes on May 4, 2017. House Democrats unanimously voted against the bill. This version of the bill included several key revisions, many of which have been the source of much controversy.

and notably includes pregnancy, mental illness and substance abuse.

This utilization of the state waivers may make it nearly impossible for the 6.3 million Americans with pre-existing conditions to find healthcare. Although their coverage will not be flat-out denied, it may be nowhere within reasonable means. Ironically, the AHCA bill provides for \$300 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy.

This raises the question: *is poverty becoming a pre-existing condition?*

Extremely low-income Americans are already having a difficult time receiving adequate healthcare. If the AHCA is passed, this difficulty will only be exacerbated. Their class status alone could determine life or death.

Well-off Americans and government employees will continue to enjoy security in their well-financed, high-quality insurance programs. They are virtually unaffected by the AHCA. The bill fails the most vulnerable of Americans and protects only the most stable and secure families, thus continuing a long tradition of punishing the poor for simply existing.

The United States Constitution declares that the function of government is to "promote the general welfare" of the people. It is time that our representatives begin to consider exactly how their actions affect their constituents' well-being – or forsake their very purpose, as proclaimed by our Founding Fathers.

The AHCA revision provides for \$8.8 billion in cuts to Medicaid over the course of 10 years. Medicaid coverage is often a lifeline for extremely low-income people with serious health concerns, and these cuts would drastically reduce accessibility to quality healthcare for these individuals. Within those 10 years, at least 23 million people will lose insurance coverage, creating a very large population of people with little or no access to necessary medical care beyond emergency rooms.

Although the AHCA requires insurers to cover all patients, insurers can increase premiums for people with pre-existing conditions by obtaining a state waiver. Consequently, these individuals will be paying more out of pocket, and this could be dangerous for the low-income population if (or when) they become sick. Coincidentally, the list of conditions that are classified as "pre-existing" has significantly grown



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Just one chair to share



by Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell
Groundcover Contributor

We have eight of those matching vinyl dining chairs at church. They've been around for a while. Both their dated design and their muted mustard color suggest someone's home furniture purchase from the 1970s. They are not the most attractive chairs I've ever seen.

Faith communities get plenty of donations like our eight chairs. Truth be told, they are in great shape, without torn places or stains, are sturdy, and are fairly comfortable, a definite upgrade from our ubiquitous folding chairs.

On a recent Sunday, I placed one of them up front in the middle of the sanctuary for our children's time. The chair became the necessary prop to introduce our kids to Musical Shares. Musical Shares is a raucous cooperative alternative to the more familiar game

of Musical Chairs. Musical Shares requires everyone to work together to win together. When the music stops, only a chair is eliminated, not a chair and a player as is the case in Musical Chairs. By the end of the game, when there is only one chair remaining, instead of two players strategically circling the last chair until one of them claims it, all the players who began the game have to figure out how to get their total number on that single chair at the same time.

Musical Shares is known for laughter with all the adjusting and readjusting on the final chair. It also offers opportunities to view the situation from more than one perspective through varied combinations of who will sit where, how the weight will be distributed and where there are possibilities to hang off the chair back.

In our worship context, the Musical Shares chair generously and tightly holding everyone, helps us visualize the loving embrace of the divine that includes each one. That inclusion is there when we agree and when we disagree, when we look forward in the same

direction and when we promote opposing directions, when our similarity seems obvious and when our diversity is shouting, when life is flowing easily among us and when every moment seems to be a challenge.

Our fragmented world isn't going to heal into wholeness if I start teaching everyone to take up Musical Shares. I know that. But I am also convinced we have to play and work, pray and dream, envision the breadth and width of our community, and start to see those who are often ignored from the angle of the shared chair, the shared table, the shared room and the shared common good. As an example, we work side-by-side on homelessness if our possessions are few, if our living situation is comfortable, and if our net worth in real estate is considerable.

It isn't an overwhelming mystery for us to figure out the value of listening into lives other than our own when a single chair, a single table, a single room or a single state of wellbeing unites us. My chair, my table, my room and my wellbeing transform into our chair, our

table, our room and our wellbeing.

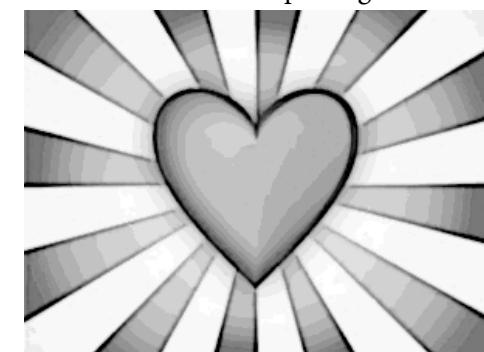
In the middle of the last century, Reinhold Niebuhr wrote: "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime..." Those of us reading this column aren't going to definitively tackle all that separates and tears us apart with harsh promises of limited winners and scores of losers across neighborhoods, continents, species and generations. However, you and I can begin anywhere, even if it is with one unattractive, mustard-colored, vinyl dining chair, as we imagine and commit who we are, what we have, and the energy and time we carry to a more excellent, life-giving way.

Groundcover News is one shared chair in our experience. What are some others? Are there stories you can offer to inspire, encourage, and revive those around you? Tell them. We need to hear them. Let's ask one another about the beauty we are bringing forth from what is broken, shattered and wounded. Playfully perched on just one chair, we can choose the future in common we'll labor toward, learn about and offer.

emotion such as appreciation, joy, peace or calm. Keep your focus on the heart breathing as you feel the emotion moving in and out of your heart.

The HeartMath Institute has conducted hundreds of research studies on the effects of heart-focused breathing. If you would like to find out more, go to www.heartmath.org.

I have been practicing massage, bodywork and energy modalities since 1992. The more I practice, the more I believe that we can heal, rebalance and experience vitality when we commit to self-care. And just a few minutes at a time really does make a difference. If you would like to learn more about how I blend bodywork with the emotional/energetic domain, check out my website: www.thecelebratedheart.com.



day on your heart when you first start practicing, in order to keep your attention on the heart as you breathe.

Between the changing political landscape, concerns about climate change and the pace of life in general, nearly everyone is experiencing elevated levels of stress. The negative effects of stress create dissonance in our physical, mental, spiritual and emotional domains. According to separate studies done by researchers Avey (2003) and Nerurkar (2013), it is estimated that between 60 and 80 percent of primary care doctor visits are related to stress, yet only three percent of patients receive stress management help.

When we lose our ability to manage our stress, it can negatively impact the quality of our sleep, our physical health, our capacity to solve problems or envision positive change and our communications with others, just to name a few. The bottom line is that stress depletes our internal "batteries" and finding time to pause and recharge often seems like just another thing to put on our to-do list.

The good news is that there is a quick and easy way to recharge our internal batteries and positively alter both our psychology and our physiology. By spending just a few minutes every day practicing a radically simple mindfulness exercise known as heart-focused

breathing, we can become aware of what is depleting our energy.

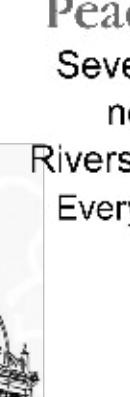
Heart-focused breathing is deceptively simple and has profound results on our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions. It allows us to bring our bodies into a state of coherence in which the nervous, cardiovascular, hormonal and immune systems work together harmoniously.

You don't need a dimly-lit room, candles or special music to do heart-focused breathing. It can be done with your eyes open, in traffic, at a stop light, during a difficult conversation, or anywhere and anytime you find yourself feeling depleted.

When we take a minute or two or three to deepen our breath, it releases DHEA into our bodies. DHEA is an anti-aging hormone that can counteract the negative effects of stress.

In order to practice this, simply deepen your breath (try inhaling to the count of five and exhaling to the count of five) and then bring your focus to the heart area. As you breathe, imagine each inhale and exhale moving through the heart. You may want to rest your

day and notice how you are feeling. With practice, you will find yourself automatically dropping into this awareness. Notice how you feel both before and after. As you become more comfortable with this exercise, you can choose to activate a positive, renewing



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Denial: not just a river in Egypt (Part Four – the NFL)

by Martin Stolzenberg
Groundcover Contributor

Editor's note: this is the last in a four-part series on major U.S. industries that are using lawmakers and public relations to thwart needed changes in our country that affect every one of us in order to maximize their profits. Parts One, Two and Three dealt with the tobacco, fossil fuel and soda industries.

Now for the latest entry into the denial sweepstakes: the National Football League (NFL). Certainly, football is acknowledged to be a dangerous sport. In fact, it used to be more brutal than it is today. According to *history.com*:

Around the beginning of the 20th century football fields were considered killing fields. With no forward passes, brute strength was required to move the ball forward. Players locked arms in mass formations and used their helmetless heads as battering rams. Gang tackles routinely buried ball carriers underneath a ton-and-a-half of tangled humanity. With little protective equipment, players sustained gruesome injuries – wrenched spinal cords, crushed skulls and broken ribs that even pierced some hearts.

Newspaper editorials called for the banishment of the sport. In stepped President Teddy Roosevelt, who was a proponent of all fields of physical activity and violence. Yet even he acknowledged that reform was necessary to save football. Using his power as president he summoned the representatives of the premier collegiate powers – Harvard, Yale and Princeton – to the White House in 1905 and urged them to curb excessive violence and set an example for the rest of the country.

The meeting didn't immediately change the norms but some leading universities dropped football in the following year. At last, in 1906, some of the more dangerous aspects of the game were abolished and the forward pass and the concept of four downs to gain 10 yards were introduced. However, it wasn't until 1913 that the forward pass became popular through the influence of the winning Notre Dame team. Modern football was born and prospered.

While these changes tamped down some of the violence and untimely deaths, they didn't eliminate the problem completely. Football remained a violent sport. In modern times football violence is again rampant, particularly in the NFL. Players are now bigger, heavier, stronger and faster than ever before. Linemen who weigh more than 300 pounds are commonplace.

While players have more protective

gear, the head remains a particularly vulnerable area. Players wear the most advanced head gear, made of customized plastic, but there is little to help them in helmet-to-helmet collisions with a defensive player operating at top speed or if their head hits the turf in a jarring tackle.

The problem has been recognized a long time, back to the 1930s, but it wasn't until the late 20th century that a connection between concussions and brain damage was made.

In 1930s, the NCAA's medical handbook warned that concussions were being treated too lightly. It recommended rest and supervision to injured players. By 1952, a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* urged players who suffered three concussions to leave football forever. By 1973, Second Impact Syndrome was identified. It found that an athlete concussed while still suffering from a previous concussion could die.

In 1994, the NFL acknowledged the danger of concussions for the first time, forming the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Committee (MTBIC). It was chaired by a New York Jets team doctor, a rheumatologist who had attended medical school in Mexico. It was apparent that this was someone who had absolutely no credentials for the job.

The committee began an ongoing study of brain trauma, but mysteriously discarded results from hundreds of NFL players. They said that "Concussions are an occupational risk, like steelworkers who go up 100 stories, or a soldier."

In 1999, the NFL's retirement board began giving out disability payments to former players suffering cognitive decline, finding that their problem was due to "league football activities." In 2000, a study found that 61 percent of former NFL players had sustained concussions, with 79 percent of players saying they had not been forced to leave the specific game when they sustained their injury. Of retired players, 31 percent had difficulty with memory, 16 percent were unable to dress themselves and 11 percent were unable to feed themselves.

A breakthrough occurred in 2002. Dr. Bennett Omalu, a pathologist, examined the brain of Mike Webster, a former Pittsburgh Steeler who had been experiencing wild mood swings and had committed suicide. Dr. Omalu found evidence of an accumulation of tau protein, evidence of a brain disease that he called Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). It established a direct link between head trauma and dementia later in life. Then in 2005, a study by the UNC Center for the Study of Retired Athletes found a connection between concussions and Alzheimer's disease, dementia and depression in

former NFL players.

Dr. Omalu published the results of his examination of Webster's brain in the *Journal of Neurosurgery*. The MTBIC attacked his report and demanded that *Neurosurgery* retract the article, which they never did. The story of Dr. Omalu's discovery and the battle by the NFL to refute his findings were the subject of the 2015 movie *Concussion*.

In 2009, for the first time, the NFL acknowledged the effects of head trauma. That year the first lawsuits against the league were filed, and this ballooned up to nearly 250 cases and 5,000 plaintiffs. Still, in 2010 Dr. Ira Casson of the MTBIC insisted that "CTE has never been linked to athletics or head trauma."

In 2012, 35 brains from dead former NFL players were examined and 34 were found to have CTE. Finally, the lawsuits from former players suing the NFL were consolidated and settled in 2013, with the NFL agreeing to pay out \$765 million without admitting liability.

That settlement covered more than 4,500 former athletes, some suffering from dementia, depression, ALS or Alzheimer's that they blamed on the head from their playing days. The plaintiffs charged that the league had concealed the dangers from concussions and rushed injured players back onto the field. Under terms of the settlement, individual awards would be capped at \$5 million. About one-third of the 12,000 former players joined the litigation. Those suffering from CTE were omitted because at the time of the settlement there was no way to detect it in living patients. While they may have other symptoms that were covered, CTE alone was not recognizable.

New testing is expected within five to 10 years that will let doctors identify living people who have CTE. So, in November of 2016, ex-players filed a lawsuit asking the NFL to recognize players who are ultimately identified as having CTE as eligible for worker's compensation. This is an attempt to help out thousands of affected players in the future who would not qualify for financial help under the terms of the now \$1 billion 2013 settlement for other brain conditions that

is still under appeal. This would apply to most of the 19,000 retired NFL players and they could qualify for 500 weeks of pay that would amount to millions of dollars each.

The league has

instituted concussion protocols for occurrences during the games, follow-up treatment and better definition of when injured players can return to play. There are increasing penalties for players who create hits that can cause a concussion. But concussions have received so much nationwide attention that many high schools are dropping football and fewer students choose to participate. Nevertheless, spokespersons for the NFL continue to say that the sport has never been safer.

Professional football remains the biggest and most popular sport in the United States. The Super Bowl is the most-watched event every year. *Bloomberg*, in a September 2016 article, estimated the overall take for the teams and the league to be \$9.5 billion per year. The 32 franchises were estimated to have an overall value of \$46 billion.

So, what more can be done? An ex-NFL offensive line coach said:

There is no modern-day helmet that could be developed to prevent or ease the problem. This is because the brain floats in suspension in the skull in fluid. When there is an abrupt stop, like a collision in a game, the brain will abruptly shift in the head and hit the side of the skull. This impact creates concussions. So it doesn't matter the type of materials or construction used in helmets. Only the collision matters.

That collision is one of the things fans love to see. Take that out of the game and it would lose much of its appeal. Owners are not likely to agree to that. The only suggestion that the coach had was perhaps tongue-in-cheek: "Go back to the old leather helmets of the 1920s and 1930s. This would make players fearful of head-to-head contact without the perceived cocoon-like state of the current plastic helmets." Maybe the NFL has to take a step backward in time, in order to take a step forward.

Corporate denial: overall insights
So, we have four industries that have virtually tripped over themselves to deny what is obvious to any fairly intelligent human being. The common

cause of this is – what else? – money

and greed. Remember the adage, "Follow the money." Think of what these disseminators of misleading and false information are doing to adversely affect the quality of life in our country.

Collectively they are injuring our lungs through encouraging smoking, endangering property and health through poisoning our atmosphere, causing obesity and diabetes from overconsumption of soda, and causing injury to wonderful athletes by denying that concussions cause brain disease. The cost to our society of these largely human-made problems runs into the trillions of dollars, not taking into account the pain, suffering and deaths of countless people.

In the meantime, we can be alert when we see new "studies" and propaganda posing as science and denying progress. When confronted with such situations, you should ask: *Who is sponsoring this and who benefits from it?* By doing this and refusing to fall for the old malarkey, you can be your own arbiter of truth.

see CONCUSSION, page 5

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AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Jewish Family Services: a refuge for many

by Sue Budin
Groundcover Contributor

A young woman refugee finds a job at a child care center and prepares for an exam that will qualify her for further training. She is working to fulfill her dream of becoming a pharmacist.

A man, recently divorced, finds support and direction from a caring therapist.

An older woman suffering from depression benefits greatly from a friendly visitor and receives goods from a food pantry. Free transportation is provided to medical appointments where she is accompanied by a volunteer.

These are just a few of the stories of people served by Jewish Family Services. There are many more from the almost 25 years that the agency has been serving the needs of people in Washtenaw County.

In the 1970s, a few dedicated volunteers recognized that refugees, especially Jewish people coming from the Soviet Union, were in need of assistance in areas such as housing, medical services, English instruction and job placement. In 1993, when Jewish Family Services was founded, these initial services continued along with a broadening of their services to include all people in Washtenaw County (regardless of religion) who needed help with these same challenges – especially the elderly, low-income residents and those with emotional issues that limited functioning in daily life.

Today, JFS is thriving with over 60 staff members, many volunteers and a comprehensive offering of services. Besides their greatly expanded programs for refugees, they offer educational opportunities – such as their Issues for Aging series – therapy, transportation, volunteer companions and much more.

Their services to older adults include their Aging in Place program and case management services which help the elderly navigate the complex system of resources available to them. Their Partners in Care Concierge service provides screened companions who escort individuals to medical appointments and write reports of what transpired.

JFS also provides support to full-time employed caregivers and out-of-state families who can't always be there to help their loved ones. The New Americans Community Club provides support to older adults from other countries, helping them access social and medical services. This assistance is offered in English and Russian. Their Friendly Visitors program is staffed by volunteers who not only accompany older adults to appointments but also spend time with them at their homes, alleviating feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Anyone who registers with JFS can also access an on-site food pantry. It supplies individuals and families with fresh produce as well as non-perishables, and even provides for special diets. They

see REFUGE, page 11

Right: Jewish Family Services staff member, Hugh Goodman, consults an immigrant family on their resettlement plans.



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How does the message apply today?

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ON MY CORNER

Thanks for aid in a time of need!!

by Elizabeth "Lit" Kurtz
Groundcover Vendor #159

Living with no home, there is the constant reality that despite all my efforts, finding a safe place to sleep at night may not happen. This was compounded for me the week that I injured my ankle. My worst fears were that I would miss the recommended surgery or have no place to recover from it afterwards. I am so thankful for the people who thought of me during this time, without whom my outcome may have turned out dramatically different.



made sure I received a ride home from the hospital and a ride to the pharmacy to get my urgently needed pain medications. Also, a physician's assistant named Karen was so thorough that all of my medications such as for my major depression were brought up-to-date during a follow-up visit. I posted about it on my YouTube channel.

Cindy, a.k.a. Kung Fu Panda's, help was invaluable. The consistency of a woman named Jerri who, along with her mother and daughter, have over the years donated large bags of bottles and cans to me certainly paid off during this episode. Every cent counted. I don't know her name, but I remember the face of the woman who gave me four \$20 bills. Since I was unable to work my normal hours, this ensured that my hotel room was covered for an additional night – so grateful!

Meeting with Ray had brought me to tears for some reason, and I recorded on my Facebook page how I felt. Shelley Deneve saw the post and came to my aid. She helped me get to my storage and retrieve a much-needed check, which enabled me to pay for an upcoming sublet. She also assisted me with a loan to get the papers I needed to maintain my income. She was a Godsend.

I will always remember the University of Michigan social worker, Lisa, who

head to the rhythm of the raps, with me right beside him bouncing mine, too, as we cruised along to my destinations. Frankly, I felt quite cool.

I am grateful to my Y customers, especially a retired maestra who, after leaving the Y shortly after my incident, made a quick, impromptu return one morning to hand me a Sweetwaters gift card. Another customer offered to buy me lunch.

And last but not least, my friend Noel has been there for me for the past few years. Not only did she help me with some very basic items like acquiring fresh undies and food, she gave a generous monetary gift to my teacher support page and encouraged a friend and others to do the same (much thanks to the woman who made a generous donation). Noel also ferreted me around from place to place when transportation was scarce and I was still unsteady on my crutches.

Noel is the one who always thinks of me on Christmas and birthdays and is just there when I need her. Anyone who has experienced life without a home knows how important it is to have that person who thinks of you when no one else does. I just celebrated my 60th birthday and her generosity makes my transitional living less onerous.

Besides these, there are so many people who offered kind words, generous tips, and were there in other ways, and for that I am incredibly appreciative. I don't take these kindnesses lightly, knowing how difficult it is to find help during some of the most crucial times in your life.

I'm on the mend and the doctors say I should be back to normal within a few months if I follow directions. For that I give thanks, too!

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Boober tours update and getting the most from your water

by Kevin Spangler
Groundcover Vendor #307

It's that time again – hot days. Boober Tours has now made the move to a 1,600-square-foot warehouse. It's amazing how much stuff I have collected in a year's time. The beautiful thing about this warehouse is that I can expand here if needed. The location could not be better – it is right between the Michigan Stadium and my place of residence. It is a lot easier to work on the bikes here and we have a lot more room to hold non-profit meetings for Washtenaw recovery advocacy programs and SOUP, a Detroit-based crowdfunding program that gives micro-grants to community programs. I will also hold world peace prayer meetings for Buddhism here.

Back in my gardening days, I re-

searched as much as I could about water. I had to use reverse-osmosis water because tap water has a lot of additives that are not good for the health of plants. If they are not good for the plants, then they are definitely not good for us.

I currently only drink distilled water mixed with sole water. Sole water is one part sea salt dissolved into two parts distilled water. I add one teaspoon to my water in the morning and one teaspoon in the afternoon. This water provides 90 of the trace elements we do not get from our food sources.

Water has memory. When you send water through pipes you make jagged memories for the water. There are many ways to reprogram your water: exposure to sunlight, meditation, thought,

and water-restructuring through magnets and "vortex" technologies. I have had a prototype made that restructures water. It has a vortex and the water is run through healing crystals and through a reverse-polarity magnet system. If you are interested in this functional kitchen art piece, contact me.

A lot of societal issues are directly related to the foods and water that we put into our bodies. I have been able to make massive changes to my life because I was able to find the root causes of my issues instead of trying to fix

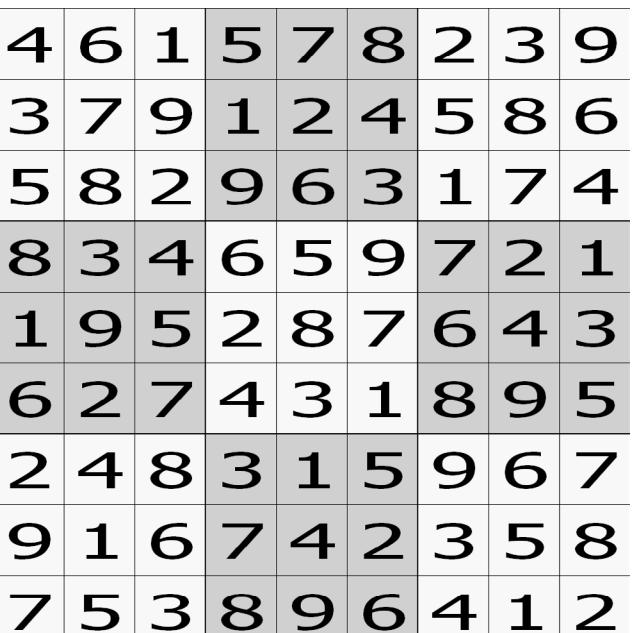
them with medications. We live in a society that believes medications help, but I believe this is not always true; they will hurt you in the long term. Self-improvement goes a lot farther than any pill.

To find more about this water subject, study Dr. Masaru Emoto's pioneering work into the effects of consciousness on the properties of water. I've learned that thought controls a lot of our reality.

It is important that we try our best to stay out of a negative mindset because our thoughts shape reality. Learning that our thoughts can restructure water means that we can restructure anything containing liquid positively or negatively, so I make it a point to pray for everyone. Even if they have done me wrong, I send them positive energy and pray for their success.

Drink more water and do more heavy breathing. It's that easy.

Boober Tours – the only way!



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Groundcover News Volunteer Meeting

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Jewish Family Services: a refuge for many

continued from page 6

receive kosher food from a food bank in Oak Park and also have foods that are staples for people of other religions and for those who have special medical needs. JFS hopes to have a demonstration kitchen in the future where they can teach good nutrition.

Thrive is their therapy program, which provides counseling for mild to moderate cases of emotional distress such as depression, anxiety, trauma and stress management.

Therapy services are provided by trained professionals in a safe, supportive setting and are covered by numerous insurance plans.

JFS's resettlement program is one of their busiest. Some background is needed to explain their rationale for providing this breadth of service. Because of the current refugee crises that exist throughout the world, people from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and other countries have been helped by resettlement programs throughout the United States. JFS is the only resettlement provider in Washtenaw County that is approved by the U.S. State Department. JFS believes that

As they adjust to living in a new country, they can access other JFS services including English language instruction and tutoring. This instruction includes much more than just learning English; it also helps them in understanding American culture and developing practical skills. Once they feel confident,

one-fifth of all U.S. immigrants settle in Michigan, due to our proximity to Dearborn with its large Middle Eastern population.

Right now, JFS serves about 150 individuals every fiscal year. The help of many volunteers, faith groups and individual donors are critical to maintaining all the services and support refugees receive.

Once a family or individual is approved for entry into the United States to a destination within Washtenaw County, JFS is on board – arranging transportation from the airport to their new apartment, which will already be stocked with food, some furniture and a welcome card, often made by children.

Volunteers will be at their home to help them navigate what will be strange and sometimes frightening surroundings.

As they adjust to living in a new country, they can access other JFS services including English language instruction and tutoring. This instruction includes much more than just learning English; it also helps them in understanding American culture and developing practical skills. Once they feel confident,

they are ready for vocational assistance including resume writing, computer skills, interview practice and field trips that will hopefully lead to employment.

The JFS citizenship program includes helping with documentation and offering classes that teach all aspects of naturalization, so new settlers will have the best chance of passing their naturalization exam. Outside attorneys provide their expertise and JFS helps with translation of legal documents on a fee-for-service basis.

Shrina Eadeh, director of the resettlement program, is a passionate advocate for the immigrants she works with who sincerely want successes for themselves and their children. She recognizes the strengths they bring with them, the courage to learn and the willingness to find their place in a new country. She tells stories of Iraqis and Afghans who

assisted American troops in war zones, some as barbers and translators. They have green cards and can seek work in this country but are distressed because they had to leave their families behind. They don't know who they can trust or if they will ever be reunited with their spouses or children. They served our country but feel lost in it. Places like JFS can be an anchor.

Walking through the maze of offices and classrooms, hearing conversations, aware of a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, it was clear to me that anyone in need can enter and be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Anya Abramzon, executive director of JFS, puts it this way: "We are not just a service provider. We're their family."

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PACKAGE PRICING

Asparagus Strata

by Elizabeth Bauman
Groundcover Contributor

This has become my new go-to recipe for late spring brunches.

Begin preparing the night before serving.

Ingredients:

1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
4 English muffins, split and toasted
2 cups shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
8 large eggs
2 cups milk
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground mustard
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Directions:

In a large saucepan, bring 8 cups of water to a boil. Add asparagus and cook uncovered until crisp-tender. Drain and rinse with very cold water. Place on paper towel and pat dry.

Arrange six English muffin halves in a greased 13x9 casserole baking dish, cut side up. Trim remaining muffin halves to fill the spaces. Layer with asparagus, red pepper and 1 cup cheese.

In large bowl whisk eggs, milk, salt, mustard and pepper. Pour over ingredients in the casserole dish, cover and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Remove strata from refrigerator and cover with remaining cheese. Bake uncovered 45 minutes or until knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand for 5 minutes before cutting.

Serve warm.



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OK, so yes, fear can be one of the biggest obstacles in life. I admit it.

Are you still obsessing about how long it took you to trust our adopted father?

Well, I'd been rejected and kicked out of so many homes, often while with kittens or about to have them. This is all so different to me.

Oh, don't be a drama queen. The family that connected us with our human dad cared about us too.

I know. Yet there was so much chaos there and here it's so peaceful. Something so new and different scared me. I wasn't ready to trust it.

At least you finally got over your fear. Though taking five years to jump in his lap was less than impressive in terms of teaching by example.

I'm just glad you've both been patient with me.

Whatever. It was embarrassing how long you took...like a stubborn human finally getting online then having to tell everyone about it. Just enjoy your naps on his bed and lap now. Maybe wish him a happy Father's Day too....

Happy Father's Day to all the real fathers, biological or not.